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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 01932 01 OF 04 151538Z
ACTION AF-01

INFO	LOG-00	AID-01	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	OASY-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	EUR-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-14	LAB-01	L-01
	ADS-00	M-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	PA-01
	PM-00	PRS-01	P-01	SB-00	SCT-00	SP-00	SSO-00
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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2005
INFO AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KIGALI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BRUSSELS 01932

DEPARTMENT FOR AF, AF/C, AND EUR/UBI

E. O./. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, BE, RW, BY, CG
SUBJECT: BELGIAN GOVERNMENT'S AFRICAN POLICY PAPER:
"IF BELGIUM DOESN'T ACT, WHO WILL?"

REF: BRUSSELS 12672 (NOTAL)

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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 01932 01 OF 04 151538Z
1. C - WHERE MARKED.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS
DATE/CASE ID: 06 AUG 2007 200103014

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SUMMARY

2. (U) FONMIN VANDENBROUCKE AND STATE SECRETARY FOR COOPERATION DERYCKE UNVEILED THE GOVERNMENT'S AFRICAN POLICY PAPER BEFORE A WELL ATTENDED SESSION OF THE SENATE ON FEB. 10. VANDENBROUCKE RECOGNIZED THE PARAMOUNTY OF BELGIUM'S MORAL AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS CENTRAL AFRICA: "IF BELGIUM DOES NOT REMAIN ENGAGED, THEN WHO WILL?" HE SAW THE GOB'S ROLE AS A CATALYST TO MOBILIZE EU AND INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR CENTRAL AFRICA.

3. (U) VANDENBROUCKE DENIED THAT BELGIUM'S NEW POLICY WOULD CONCENTRATE ON SOUTHERN AFRICA. BOTH HE AND DERYCKE, HOWEVER, WARNED OF THE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES FOR THE ENTIRE CONTINENT SHOULD THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIMENT FAIL. SECRETARY DERYCKE DECRINED THE DISPROPORTIONATE AMOUNTS OF MONEY CONSUMED BY THE CURRENT "COOPERANT" POLICY AND ANNOUNCED HIS SECRETARIAT WOULD PROPOSE NEW COFINANCING GUIDELINES FOR NGO PROJECTS.

4. (C) IN A PRIVATE BRIEFING ON FEB. 14, DEPUTY CHEF DE CABINET RIK COOLSAET EXPLAINED THAT FONMIN VANDENBROUCKE HAD DECIDED AGAINST "EQUILIBRATING" BELGIUM'S AFRICAN POLICY, AS THE CLAES POLICY DRAFT HAD SUGGESTED. THE OPPOSITION PARTIES, THE FLEMISH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, AND THE PRESS HAD GOTTEN HOLD OF THIS FIRST DRAFT. ATTACKS ON
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PAGE 03 BRUSSE 01932 01 OF 04 151538Z
THE GOB'S AFRICA PAPER, AS WELL AS REPORTS ON DISSENSION WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT'S RANKS, WERE BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT VANDENBROUCKE WOULD OPT FOR THE CLAES MODEL WHICH SOUGHT TO DISENGAGE BELGIUM PARTIALLY FROM CENTRAL AFRICA. THE DRAFT OF WHAT EVENTUALLY BECAME THE GOVERNMENT'S PRESENTATION TO THE SENATE WAS CLOSELY HELD BY THE CABINET, WHICH SUPPORTED VANDENBROUCKE'S POSITION.

5. (C) THE PREPARATION OF A SECOND VERSION ACCOUNTS FOR THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN CRITICISM LEVELLED AT THE

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GOVERNMENT FOR "ABANDONING" CENTRAL AFRICA AND THE ABSENCE OF ANY STATEMENTS IN THE AFRICA PAPER WHICH WOULD INDICATE BELGIUM IS DISENGAGING FROM RWANDA, BURUNDI, AND ZAIRE. EXCEPT FOR THE ULTRA RIGHT VLAAMS BLOK, NO PARTY MEMBERS OPPOSED REMAINING ENGAGED IN CENTRAL AFRICA. DIFFERENCES WILL ARISE OVER THE DEGREE AND TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT.

TOPICS THAT BEAR WATCHING INCLUDE THE DEBATE OVER THE ROLE OF NGO'S IN ZAIRE AND EVENTUAL STRUCTURAL ASSISTANCE TO THE KENGO GOVERNMENT. NOTABLY ABSENT FROM THE POLICY PAPER ARE SPECIFICS ON FUTURE AID INITIATIVES. THE FONMIN, ACCORDING TO COOLSAET, WANTS TO AVOID HAVING SPECIAL INTEREST NGO'S DOMINATE THE PROCESS. VANDENBROUCKE WARNED THAT "PARALLEL" DIPLOMACY WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE - A NOT TOO SUBTLE HINT TO NGO'S WHO MAY TRY TO PROTECT THEIR BUDGETS AND STAFFING LEVELS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY. END SUMMARY.

A PRINCELY PRESENCE HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF AFRICA DEBATE

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PAGE 04 BRUSSE 01932 01 OF 04 151538Z

6. (U) FOR ONLY THE THIRD OR FOURTH TIME IN BELGIAN HISTORY, THE CROWN PRINCE ATTENDED A DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT IN HIS CAPACITY AS A SENATOR. PRINCE PHILIPPE, SITTING ACCORDING TO SOME WAGS TOO CLOSE TO SENATORS FROM THE WALLOON ECOLOGIST PARTY, ATTENDED THE FEB. 10 PARLIAMENTARY SESSION AT WHICH FONMIN VANDENBROUCKE AND STATE SECRETARY DERYCKE FORMALLY UNVEILED THE GOVERNMENT'S AFRICAN POLICY PAPER. THE DOCUMENT ENTITLED "BELGIUM AND SUBSAHARAN AFRICA: AGENDA FOR A NEW DIALOGUE AND A NEW

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CONFIDENTIAL PTQ6924

PAGE 01 BRUSSE 01932 02 OF 04 151538Z

ACTION AF-01

INFO	LOG-00	AID-01	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	OASY-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
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COOPERATION", SETS FORTH THE NEW PRINCIPLES OF THE GOB'S
AFRICA POLICY. NOTE: THE LAST COMPREHENSIVE POLICY PAPER
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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 01932 02 OF 04 151538Z
ON AFRICA WAS FORMULATED IN THE EARLY 1980'S UNDER
MINISTER LEO TINDEMANNS.

7. (U) VANDENBROUCKE, WHO QUOTED AT LENGTH FROM THE ROBERT KAPLAN ARTICLE ON THE DISINTEGRATION OF AFRICA, NOTED HE DID NOT SUBSCRIBE TO THE AUTHOR'S APOCALYPTIC VISION OF THE SUBSAHARAN CONTINENT. WHILE THERE WAS REASON FOR DISCOURAGEMENT, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OFTEN DISREGARDED SIGNS OF PROGRESS AND POLITICAL MATURITY IN THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTED TO AFRICA'S PERENNIAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT, VANDENBROUCKE CALLED FOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR LAUNCHING THEIR OWN RECOVERIES. THE TIME HAD COME, HE SAID, TO TURN A NEW PAGE IN BELGIUM'S AFRICAN POLICY. THE GOB'S NEW APPROACH WOULD BE A TYPE OF CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, WITH BOTH SIDES EXPECTED TO DISCHARGE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.

HELPING THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES - WITH A LOT OF HELP
FROM OUR FRIENDS.

8. (U) VANDENBROUCKE ASSURED THE PARLIAMENTARIANS THAT BELGIUM WOULD CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THOSE COUNTRIES THAT FURTHERED DEMOCRATIZATION, GOOD GOVERNANCE, AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. CURRENT ASSISTANCE TO RWANDA AND BURUNDI CONFIRMED THAT THE GOB INTENDED TO CONTINUE BILATERAL PROGRAMS. NONETHELESS, BELGIUM HAD TO BE REALISTIC ABOUT ITS CAPABILITIES. FOR THIS REASON, THE

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FONMIN ADDED, HE HAD EXPLICITLY OPTED FOR A POLICY THAT
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PAGE 03 BRUSSE 01932 02 OF 04 151538Z
MOBILIZED THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY VIS-A-VIS CENTRAL
AFRICA. BELGIUM WOULD ACT AS THE CATALYZER FOR
MULTILATERAL EFFORTS IN THE REGION.

9. (U) THE COUNTRY'S ETHICAL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITIES
TOWARDS CENTRAL AFRICA REMAINED PARAMOUNT, THE FONMIN
INSISTED. BELGIAN INVOLVEMENT WAS NECESSARY NOT JUST
BECAUSE OF ITS TRADITIONAL EXPERTISE BUT BECAUSE WHAT WAS
GOING ON IN THE REGION WAS UNACCEPTABLE. THERE WAS NO
QUESTION ABOUT WITHDRAWING FROM ZAIRE, RWANDA, AND
BURUNDI. IF BELGIUM DID NOT REMAIN ENGAGED, THEN WHO
WOULD, VANDENBROUCKE ASKED RHETORICALLY.

SOUTH AFRICA WILL NOT SUPPLANT CENTRAL AFRICA BUT WE CAN'T
LET THAT EXPERIMENT FAIL

10. (U) IN DIRECT RESPONSE TO PRE-DEBATE PRESS AND
OPPOSITION STATEMENTS THAT CLAIMED SOUTHERN AFRICA WOULD
NOW BECOME THE NEW FOCUS OF BELGIAN POLICY, VANDENBROUCKE
CATEGORICALLY DENIED THIS WAS THE CASE. AT THE SAME TIME,
SOUTH AFRICA COULD BE THE MOTOR FOR DEVELOPING THE ENTIRE
SOUTHERN PART OF THE CONTINENT. FAILURE OF THE NEWLY
ELECTED GOVERNMENT WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC FOR THE REGION.
IT WAS A MATTER OF SELF-INTEREST FOR THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY TO ENSURE THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIMENT
SUCCEEDED, IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE SIMILAR DEVELOPMENTS IN
OTHER COUNTRIES.

11. (U) AS A FINAL RIPOSTE TO THOSE WHO CLAIMED A
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PAGE 04 BRUSSE 01932 02 OF 04 151538Z
REORIENTATION OF BELGIAN INTEREST WAS INEVITABLE,
VANDENBROUCKE NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT PAPER HAD NOT
ADOPTED SOUTH AFRICA AS ONE OF ITS PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES.
THE PROOF COULD BE FOUND IN THE BUDGETS OF THE MFA AND THE
AGENCY FOR COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT. THE FONMIN
CONCLUDED BY CALLING FOR CLOSER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE
REGIONS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN DEVELOPING
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR CENTRAL AFRICA.

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PAGE 01
ACTION AF-01

BRUSSE 01932 03 OF 04 151539Z

INFO	LOG-00	AID-01	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	OASY-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
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NGO'S WILL BE WORKING UNDER DIFFERENT RULES

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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 01932 03 OF 04 151539Z

12. (U) STATE SECRETARY DERYCKE, WHO CONTINUED VANDENBROUCKE'S PRESENTATION, NOTED THAT SUPPORTING DEMOCRATIZATION INITIATIVES WOULD BE ONE OF THE GOB'S PRINCIPAL GOALS. SIMILARLY, SUPPORT FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION MECHANISMS WOULD BE INTENSIFIED - PROBABLY THROUGH THE OAU.

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13. (U) IN A DIRECT REFERENCE TO PRESS AND OPPOSITION STATEMENTS REPORTS THAT ALLEGED THAT THE VIEWS OF FRANCOPHONE AND FLEMISH NGO'S DIFFERED SIGNIFICANTLY ON HOW AID SHOULD BE STRUCTURED, DERYCKE DENIED THAT DEVELOPMENT AID WAS TARGETED AS EITHER FRANCOPHONE OR ANGLOPHONE. BELGIUM, HE SAID, WORKED WITH MULTILINGUAL POPULATIONS WHOSE COMMON TRAIT WAS POVERTY. AFTER DECRYING THE DISPROPORTIONATE AMOUNT OF MONEY CONSUMED BY THE CURRENT "COOPERANT" POLICY, DERYCKE ANNOUNCED THE SECRETARIAT WOULD BE SUBMITTING A FORMAL PROPOSAL TO THE CABINET TO SET FORTH NEW COFINANCING GUIDELINES FOR NGO PROJECTS. DERYCKE NOTED THAT SALARIES AND OTHER COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH KEEPING COOPERANTS ABROAD ACCOUNTED FOR APPROXIMATELY 59 PERCENT OF THE GOB DEVELOPMENT BUDGET. NOTE: IN THE SHORT TERM THE NEW GUIDELINES WILL MOST HEAVILY AFFECT PROJECTS IN ZAIRE. BECAUSE OF THE GOB'S REFUSAL TO RESTART STRUCTURAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS TO THE KENGO GOVERNMENT, MOST OF ITS DEVELOPMENT BUDGET IS BEING FUNNELLED THROUGH ZAIRIAN AND BELGIAN NGO'S.

THE TORTUOUS PATH FROM VERSION ONE TO VERSION TWO
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PAGE 03 BRUSSE 01932 03 OF 04 151539Z

14. (C) ON FEB. 14 DEPUTY CHEF DE CABINET RIK COOLSAET BRIEFED POLOFF ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE POLICY PAPER. POLOFF ASKED WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE FIRST DRAFT WHICH FIRMLY SET OUT TO "EQUILIBRATE" BELGIAN POLICY IN CENTRAL AFRICA. COOLSAET, WHO CODRAFTED THE PAPER WITH LODE WILLEMS AND OTHERS, SAID THE SIX OPTIONS THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HAD BEEN ASKED TO CONSIDER (REFTEL) HAD BEEN INSERTED BY FORMER FONMIN CLAES. CLAES HAD PERSONALLY OPPOSED BELGIUM CONCENTRATING SO HEAVILY IN CENTRAL AFRICA.

15. (C) THE OPPOSITION PARTIES, THE PRESS, AND SOME ELEMENTS WITHIN THE PM'S PARTY - THE FLEMISH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS OR CVP - HAD OBTAINED PORTIONS OF VERSION ONE OF THE POLICY PAPER. AWARE OF CLAES' DESIRE TO MOVE BELGIUM AWAY FROM ITS PREOCCUPATION WITH CENTRAL AFRICA, THEY HAD ASSUMED THE FINAL POLICY PAPER WOULD ESPOUSE THOSE SAME

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VIEWS. THAT ACCOUNTED FOR THE PREEMPTIVE CRITICISM IN THE MEDIA AND THE CAMPAIGNS BY NGO'S TO "SENSITIZE" THE PUBLIC TO AN IMMINENT WITHDRAWAL FROM CENTRAL AFRICA.

16. (C) COOLSAET SAID THAT VANDENBROUCKE DOES NOT SHARE CLAES' VIEWS. WHILE HE DOES NOT FEEL GUILTY ABOUT BELGIUM'S FORMER ROLE IN AFRICA, VANDENBROUCKE AS A SOCIALIST BELIEVES THE COUNTRY HAS A MORAL AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO ITS FORMER COLONIES. IN ADDITION, THE FONMIN IS A PRAGMATIST. HE BELIEVES BELGIUM SHOULD STAY ENGAGED IN PLACES WHERE ITS EXPERTISE IS VALUABLE. CENTRAL AFRICA IS ONE OF THOSE PLACES. THIS FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE IN APPROACH RESULTED IN A NEW VERSION OF THE

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PAGE 04 BRUSSE 01932 03 OF 04 151539Z
AFRICA PAPER. ACCORDING TO COOLSAET, THE CABINET COMPLETELY SUPPORTED THE FINAL PAPER.

COMMENT

17. (C) COOLSAET'S ACCOUNTING EXPLAINS WHY THE

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 01932 04 OF 04 151540Z
ACTION AF-01

INFO	LOG-00	AID-01	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	OASY-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
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OPPOSITION AND PRESS CRITICIZED SOMETHING THAT FAILED TO
MATERIALIZE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S PAPER - A SIGNIFICANT TILT
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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 01932 04 OF 04 151540Z
TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA. THE FACT THAT THE FINAL VERSION
BASICALLY CONFIRMED WHAT MOST OF THE SENATORS WANTED TO
HEAR, I.E., THAT BELGIUM WOULD REMAIN ENGAGED IN CENTRAL
AFRICA, ROBBED THE SENATE OPPOSITION OF MUCH OF ITS THUNDER.

18. (C) WHAT IS LIKELY TO CAUSE FUTURE STORMS IS THE
QUESTION OF HOW NGO'S WILL OPERATE. THE GOVERNMENT'S
ESTIMATES OF BILATERAL AID FOR 1995 FORECAST ALMOST BF 2.5
BILLION FOR RWANDA, BURUNDI, AND ZAIRE IN VARIOUS AID
PROGRAMS. FOR NOW, WHILE RWANDA AND BURUNDI HAVE
GOVERNMENTS TRYING TO FUNCTION ALONG LINES THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS URGING, AID CAN BE DISBURSED
THROUGH GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS.

19. (C) ZAIRE IS ANOTHER QUESTION ALTOGETHER.

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END

COMMENT.

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PAGE 03
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BRUSSE 01932 04 OF 04 151540Z

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